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March 24, 2011

The Honorable Norma Torres
California State Assembly
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: **AB 1185** (Torres) – As Introduced February 18, 2011 – **SUPPORT**

Dear Assemblywoman Torres:

The County of San Bernardino is pleased to support AB 1185, which addresses California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) exemptions for specified retail facilities. As you know, the economic downturn has severely impacted revenue for businesses statewide, resulting in an increasing number of vacant or foreclosed retail buildings throughout the state. If a vacant building is not maintained or becomes neglected it has the potential to develop into a public nuisance. If not addressed, vacant structures can attract transients, thereby becoming a breeding ground for criminal activity. Unfortunately, local agencies are left with allocating scarce resources to mitigate the potential adverse impacts of abandoned structures. Further, vacant buildings deteriorate the aesthetic beauty of a community and make it difficult for local agencies to attract new investment and retain existing businesses. AB 1185 has the potential to alleviate these issues as well as spur economic development and job creation.

AB 1185 seeks to amend the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pertaining to vacant retail buildings in an effort to encourage their reuse. Amending CEQA is not unprecedented. In 1995, the Legislature amended CEQA as it pertained to closed military bases in order to encourage the reuse of these facilities. Likewise, AB 1185 seeks to amend CEQA as it applies to vacant/abandoned retail buildings in an effort to encourage their reuse.

The intent of AB 1185 is to encourage retail property owners/tenants to restore deteriorated buildings. In order for a project to be exempt from CEQA provisions, the project must clear strict new guidelines that take into account balancing economic development and environmental stewardship. For example, AB 1185 requires that eligible projects improve energy efficiency, reduce water consumption and adhere to existing land use ordinances. The economic revitalization of our region is a high

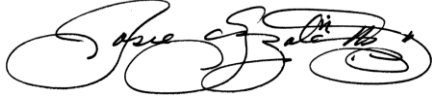
The mission of the government of the County of San Bernardino is to satisfy its customers by providing service that promotes the health, safety, well being, and quality of life of its residents according to the County Charter, general laws, and the will of the people it serves.

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priority for the County of San Bernardino, and this legislation is an important step in rebuilding our local economy.

For these reasons, the County of San Bernardino is pleased to support AB 1185. If you have any questions, please contact Josh Candelaria, Deputy Legislative Director at (909) 387-4280.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Josie Gonzales", with a stylized flourish at the end.

JOSIE GONZALES

Chair, Board of Supervisors